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United Nations

Committee on Information

Report on the twenty-fifth session (28 April-9 May 2003)

General Assembly
Official Records
Fifty-eighth Session
Supplement No. 21 (A/58/21)

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Note

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Chapter I
Introduction

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided to maintain the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, established under Assembly resolution 33/115 C of 18 December 1978, which would be known as the Committee on Information, and to increase its membership from 41 to 66. In section I, paragraph 2, of its resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979, the Assembly requested the Committee on Information:

> "(a) To continue to examine United Nations public information policies and activities, in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;
>
> "(b) To evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications;
>
> "(c) To promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and to make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly",

and requested the Committee on Information and the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

2. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly, in its resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980, expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee and the recommendations of its Ad Hoc Working Group,[1] reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in Assembly resolution 34/182 and decided to increase the membership of the Committee from 66 to 67. The Committee on Information agreed, at its organizational session in 1980, that the principle of geographical rotation would be applied to all the officers of the Committee and that they should be elected for two-year terms of office.

3. At its thirty-sixth to fifty-first sessions (see resolutions 36/149 B, 37/94 B, 38/82 B, 39/98 A, 40/164 A, 41/68 A, 42/162 A and B, 43/60 A and B, 44/50, 45/76 A and B, 46/73 B, 47/73 B, 48/44 B, 49/38 B, 50/31 B and 51/138 B), the General Assembly again expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the reports of the Committee[2] and its recommendations and reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in its resolution 34/182. At its fifty-second session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[3] and adopted consensus resolutions 52/70 A and B of 10 December 1997. At its fifty-third session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[4] and adopted consensus resolutions 53/59 A and B of 3 December 1998. At its fifty-fourth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[5] and adopted consensus resolutions 54/82 A and B of 6 December 1999. At its fifty-fifth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[6] and adopted consensus resolutions 55/136 A and B of 8 December 2000. At its fifty-sixth session, the

Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[7] and adopted consensus resolutions 56/64 A of 10 December 2001 and 56/64 B of 24 December 2001. At its fifty-seventh session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[8] and adopted consensus resolutions 57/130 A and B of 11 December 2002.

4. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly appointed two new members of the Committee, namely, China and Mexico; at its forty-first session, the Assembly appointed Malta as a new member of the Committee; at its forty-third session, the Assembly appointed Hungary, Ireland and Zimbabwe as new members of the Committee; and at its forty-fourth session, the Assembly appointed Nepal as a new member.

5. At its forty-fifth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee on Information, to increase the membership of the Committee from 74 to 78 and appointed Czechoslovakia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica and Uruguay as members. The Assembly also decided to appoint the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic as a member of the Committee, with immediate effect, to fill the vacancy left by the German Democratic Republic.

6. At its forty-sixth session the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee from 78 to 79 and appointed Burkina Faso as a member.

7. At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 79 to 81 and appointed the Republic of Korea and Senegal as members.

8. At its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 81 to 83 and appointed Gabon and Israel as members.

9. At its forty-ninth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 83 to 88 and appointed Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan and South Africa as members.

10. At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 88 to 89 and appointed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a member.

11. At its fifty-second session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 89 to 90 and appointed Georgia as a member.

12. At its fifty-third session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 90 to 93 and appointed Angola, the Republic of Moldova and Solomon Islands as members.

13. At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 93 to 95 and appointed Liberia and Mozambique as members of the Committee.

14. At its fifty-fifth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 95 to 97 and appointed Armenia and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya as members of the Committee. Furthermore, the admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to membership in the United Nations, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/12 of 1 November 2000, terminated the membership of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in all organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations, including the Committee on Information.

15. At its fifty-sixth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 96 to 98 and appointed Azerbaijan and Monaco as members.

16. At its fifty-seventh session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 98 to 99 and appointed Saudi Arabia as a member.

17. The Committee is composed of the following Member States:

Algeria	Congo
Angola	Costa Rica
Argentina	Côte d'Ivoire
Armenia	Croatia
Azerbaijan	Cuba
Bangladesh	Cyprus
Belarus	Czech Republic
Belgium	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Belize	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Benin	Denmark
Brazil	Ecuador
Bulgaria	Egypt
Burkina Faso	El Salvador
Burundi	Ethiopia
Chile	Finland
China	France
Colombia	Gabon

Georgia
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Guyana
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Lebanon
Liberia
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Malta
Mexico
Monaco
Mongolia
Morocco
Mozambique
Nepal
Netherlands
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Republic of Korea
Republic of Moldova
Romania
Russian Federation
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Singapore
Slovakia
Solomon Islands
Somalia
South Africa
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Syrian Arab Republic
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Yemen
Zimbabwe

Chapter II
Organizational questions

A. Opening of the session

18. The organizational meeting of the twenty-fifth session of the Committee on Information was held on 28 April 2003 at United Nations Headquarters. The session was opened by the Chairman of the Committee, Milos Alcalay (Venezuela).

B. Election of officers

19. In accordance with the principle of geographical rotation, the Committee held elections for a new Bureau for a two-year term. Upon his nomination by the representative of the Republic of Korea, Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury (Bangladesh) was elected Chairman by acclamation. Upon their nomination by the representatives of Nigeria, Germany and Croatia, respectively, Larbi Djacta (Algeria), Sebastião Filipe Coelho Ferreira (Portugal) and Marius Ioan Dragolea (Romania) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation. Upon her nomination by the representative of Belize, Janice Miller (Jamaica) was elected Rapporteur, also by acclamation. The officers of the Committee on Information for the period 2003-2004 are thus as follows:

Chairman:
Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury (Bangladesh)

Vice-Chairmen:
Larbi Djacta (Algeria)
Sebastião Filipe Coelho Ferreira (Portugal)
Marius Ioan Dragolea (Romania)

Rapporteur:
Janice Miller (Jamaica)

C. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

20. At its organizational meeting, the Committee adopted the following agenda and programme of work (A/AC.198/2003/1):

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
4. Statement by the Chairman.
5. Admission of new members.
6. Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.
7. General debate.
8. Consideration of reports submitted by the Secretary-General.

9. Commemoration of World Press Freedom Day.

10. Open-ended working group of the Committee on Information.

11. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

21. The Committee held the substantive meetings of its twenty-fifth session at United Nations Headquarters from 28 April to 9 May 2003.

22. For its consideration of agenda item 8, the Committee had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on:

(a) Reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2003/2);

(b) Programmatic aspects of the proposed programme budget for 2004-2005 for the Department of Public Information (A/AC.198/2003/3);

(c) Implementation of the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations (A/AC.198/2003/4);

(d) Modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries (A/AC.198/2003/5);

(e) Activities of the United Nations Communications Group in 2002 (A/AC.198/2003/6);

(f) Review of the structure and operations of United Nations information centres (A/57/747).

D. Observers

23. The following Member States took part in the session as observers: Australia, Canada, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, the Dominican Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Paraguay, Qatar, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Switzerland and Tajikistan. The Holy See also participated as an observer.

24. Representatives of the following specialized agencies also participated as observers: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organization. The International Organization of la Francophonie also participated as an observer.

E. Commemoration of World Press Freedom Day

25. On 2 May, the Committee observed World Press Freedom Day 2003 with an event on the media and armed conflict, organized by the Department of Public Information. The Deputy Secretary-General opened the meeting, which was also addressed by the Chairman of the Committee on Information, the Assistant Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the President of the United Nations Correspondents Association. A number of distinguished print and broadcast journalists took part in a panel discussion on the theme "The media and armed conflict". The speakers focused on the role of world media in their coverage of armed conflicts, including conflict

prevention and post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. Special attention was paid to the emerging policies and best practices that ensure responsible coverage while encouraging the widest press freedom. The event was moderated by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.

Chapter III
General debate

26. Statements in the general debate were made by the following States members of the Committee on Information: Algeria, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil (on behalf of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries), Burkina Faso, China, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Greece (on behalf of the European Union), India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Jamaica (on behalf of the Caribbean Community), Japan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Tunisia, Ukraine, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America, Venezuela and Yemen. The session was also addressed by two observers: Canada (on behalf of Canada and Australia) and Switzerland. The general debate was preceded by statements made by the Chairman of the Committee (see annex I) and the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Department of Public Information (see annex II).

27. In taking up the substantive questions before the Committee, several speakers said they attached great importance to the commemoration of World Press Freedom Day, which in 2003 would be observed at United Nations Headquarters on 2 May. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a large group, regretted that freedom of the press did not exist in many countries. Freedom of opinion and expression was a right accepted worldwide and enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He strongly condemned the use of violence to hinder the work of journalists and attempts to control the media by distorting or suppressing information.

28. Another speaker, stressing the importance of World Press Freedom Day, said there was a need to consider the role that the United Nations could play in opening up closed societies and in promoting access to impartial and unregulated information. He hoped that in future, people throughout the world would be able to look to the information resources of the United Nations as a reliable source, especially when their own Governments denied them the opportunity of free access to information. Another speaker, expressing concern about the lack of balance in the way news was presented, hoped that the United Nations would have a wide impact in assisting national media organizations in providing accuracy and balance in the dissemination of news and information. The media message of the United Nations, noted another speaker, should take into account the cultural distortions seen in some public media campaigns. Such distortions could threaten international peace and security by creating tensions among cultures and civilizations. Several speakers stated that the establishment of an equitable information and communications order should be a primary objective of international public information activities. Such an information and communications order could contribute to the democratization of international society and the creation of favourable conditions for the maintenance of international peace and security, asserted another speaker.

29. Most speakers emphasized the central role of the United Nations and of the Department of Public Information as its public voice. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a large group, noted that since the crisis in Iraq, world opinion had been characterized by deep concern and sadness. At such a difficult time, the United Nations must persevere and reflect the diversity and cultural integrity of civilizations. The United Nations must bring together that most important "human

wealth" and orient it towards peace and life, and, to the extent possible, put an end to war and suffering. He underlined that it was very important for the Organization to be highly visible and to adapt itself to meet the new challenges. In that process of revitalization and adaptation, he said, the Department of Public Information had been called upon to play a significant and dynamic role, for it was the Department that had helped to create the international image of the United Nations, explain its role and show the impact of its actions on international relations.

30. Another speaker, expressing his firm belief in the central role of the United Nations in the current world, underlined the importance of a strong Department of Public Information as the "voice of the Organization". Given the situation prevailing in the world currently, he noted, the Department should intensify its campaign to promote the purposes and principles of the United Nations and multilateralism. The times called for greater efforts to inform the world of the broader dimensions of the work of the United Nations, said another speaker.

31. Several speakers referred to the growing digital divide between developed and developing countries and called for greater efforts by the Department to close that gap. Paradoxically, while the world was becoming smaller, the digital divide was growing, one delegation commented. Under such circumstances, he said, the Department of Public Information must ensure that all countries had equal access to the benefits of information technologies.

32. One delegation noted that many developing countries lacked the necessary infrastructure and resources to benefit from the rapid advance of information and communication technologies. Until the ever-increasing digital divide was addressed effectively, radio broadcasting remained the most cost-effective and universal means of communications in many developing countries, he said. Another speaker, emphasizing the need to rely on traditional means of communication, noted that since the need for information was most critically felt in the developing world, which did not have many options at its disposal, the United Nations must make a special effort to reach out to target audiences there. Another speaker, referring to the challenges many developing countries faced, noted that the media in developing countries were lagging behind, not because of a lack of political will, but because of the lack of resources to build up the information infrastructure.

33. Several speakers noted that the World Summit on the Information Society, the first phase of which would take place in Geneva in December 2003 and the second phase in Tunis in 2005, provided a good opportunity to make serious efforts to close the current digital gap. The growing disparity between countries could become worse if efforts were not made to take advantage of technological advances, one speaker said. In that regard, the World Summit should bring about a consensus to share technology in accordance with the spirit of the Millennium Declaration, he noted.

34. Some delegations felt that, given the challenging nature of the times, the Committee on Information had a key role to play in reversing the growing polarization between different cultures and religions. As one speaker noted, the current negative trends were bound to affect the harmony and homogeneity desired by all. He emphasized that the Committee on Information had the mandate to promote the paramount goals of the United Nations and to create better understanding and greater good will among the nations of the world by building bridges between various societies, cultures, religions and regions. One delegation,

expressing support for the Secretary-General's vision and proposals for reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information, argued for reaffirming the key role of the Committee on Information in guiding the process of restructuring and repositioning the Department of Public Information. Another delegation called for a review of the role of the Committee on Information, especially in the wake of recent developments in the world. The Committee should abandon its "dry review" of the work of the Secretariat, one speaker said, and become more involved in the promotion of sources of information. In recent months, the world had witnessed great distortions in the press. The Committee should consider that issue and work closely with UNESCO to improve the access of developing countries to sources of information, he said.

35. The new mission statement of the Department of Public Information was welcomed by most delegations. The goals and purposes of the Department had now been better formulated and the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the Department had been enhanced, noted one speaker. In welcoming the new direction adopted by the Department, many speakers felt that the new operating model and organizational structure introduced under the second phase of the Secretary-General's reform process would provide the Department with renewed focus and vigour. One speaker, speaking on behalf of a large group, felt that the new strategic directions taken by the Department provided it with an extraordinary opportunity further to rationalize and optimize its activities, maximize the use of its resources and enhance its political visibility and impact. Another speaker, pledging his delegation's support for the current efforts, noted that the reorientation process undertaken by the Department was both difficult and complex and could not be solved with a single step. The reform process was yielding practical results and providing new opportunities to publicize the role of the Organization, said another speaker.

36. Another delegation, welcoming the report of the Secretary-General on reorientation (A/AC.198/2003/2), felt that the Department had made every effort to reorient its activities. Reform, he noted, was a process, not an event. Keeping that in mind, the Department should continuously adapt itself to meet new challenges. The new divisions established as part of the Department's reorientation, one speaker noted, might provide a way to disseminate the culture of peace and strengthen mutual respect among cultures and civilizations.

37. One speaker, speaking on behalf of a large group, cautioned that, while the progressive restructuring of the Department had been noted, the process should not be conducted at the expense of the programmes related to the priority developmental issues, such as conflict prevention, poverty eradication, HIV/AIDS, dialogue among civilizations and cultures, sustainable development, the battle against international terrorism and the needs of Africa. One delegation, noting that not all areas it considered important had been listed, asked the Department to include in its list of priorities such areas as education, culture, the fight against drugs and organized crime, gender equality, gender perspective and greater emphasis on the need to promote tolerance and non-discrimination. Another speaker, on behalf of a large group, noted appreciatively the Department's resolve to be guided by the priority areas identified by the Millennium Declaration, as well as the World Summit on the Information Society and the International Year of Freshwater 2003. He hoped that similar attention would be paid to the Barbados +10 international meeting, to be held in Mauritius in 2004. One delegation noted that the basic message of the

Department included seven goals, but that it disregarded the one relating to international cooperation and transfer of technology and transparency in international trade. That goal was crucial if necessary resources for the other seven were to be mobilized. He cautioned that if the Department failed to raise global awareness of the need to ensure the necessary human, technical and financial resources to attain the Millennium Development Goals, the current negative trend of diminishing development assistance would continue.

38. One speaker noted that the communications goals of the Department had been better defined and cooperation between the Department and other Secretariat departments strengthened with the creation of the Strategic Communications Division, which would be responsible for developing communications strategies to promote the work of the United Nations on priority issues. Another delegation, commending the Department for implementing its new organizational structure, especially noted the designation of focal points to work with substantive departments to identify target audiences and to develop information programmes and media strategies for priority issues. The integration of the network of information centres into the Strategic Communications Division was essential for coordinating and streamlining the Organization's information activities, said one delegate. Another speaker, reaffirming his delegation's support for closer coordination between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, underlined the importance of adopting a more proactive and professional approach in relations between the two Departments in order to achieve the mandate of peacekeeping operations successfully. He asked the Department of Public Information to apprise Member States of the progress made so far in respect of modalities of cooperation and relevant structural rearrangements, and its future plans for increased coordination with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Another speaker, recalling that the General Assembly had declared 29 May the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, welcomed the Department's plan to commemorate the Day for the first time in 2003, which would be the fifty-fifth year of United Nations peacekeeping.

39. The question of the regionalization of United Nations information centres was addressed by several speakers. Some of them noted with appreciation the Secretary-General's proposal to rationalize and consolidate the information centres located in Western Europe into a hub and welcomed the fact that that would achieve a better distribution of resources to information centres in developing countries and lead to the redeployment of resources to other high-priority activities, such as advancing multilingualism on the United Nations web site and the systematic evaluation of the impact of major products and services. One speaker, on behalf of a large group, stressed the importance of the information centres for the developing countries, especially the least developed countries, as valuable sources of information and means of communication and interaction with the host countries. Another speaker, on behalf of another large group, reiterated his group's belief that the establishment of such regional hubs should take place on a case-by-case basis, with sensitivity to the unique needs and interests of the region involved. One speaker, also welcoming the Secretary-General's proposal, asked the Department to apply the hub approach to other regions gradually, invariably in consultation with the Member States concerned.

40. One delegate, disagreeing with the proposal for regional hubs, argued that the critically important activities and functions of an information centre could not be

performed through a "remote control" method from a regional hub. The population in European countries would need to be informed of the role, purpose and functions of the United Nations as candidly and effectively as those in Asian and African countries, he argued. It would not be prudent to undertake such a reorganization and restructuring at the current important time, he said, and he asked the Department to review the proposal. Another speaker, who described the proposal for regionalization as "not a good idea", told the Committee that for countries in Latin America, geographical distances and transportation costs made it unfeasible for a certain information centre to have clients beyond the borders of the host country. One delegation suggested that the regional hub in Western Europe should be located in Geneva. One delegation, stating that the closure of nine information centres in Western Europe could create some confusion, asked for clarification on the future of the information office at UNESCO in Paris. Another delegation, calling for greater contributions from host Governments in support of information centres, proposed to amend the guidelines and criteria for the reorganization of United Nations information centres so that the overall support of a host Government was properly reflected.

41. Several speakers reviewed the performance of individual information centres. One speaker described the role of the information centre in Ouagadougou as "irreplaceable" and suggested that, given the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire since 2002, it had a strategic position in terms of public information and initiatives to restore peace and handle related humanitarian issues. The information centre in Dhaka was praised by a speaker for creating a very good web site in the local language, catering to the information requirements of some 250 million people in and outside the country. The role of the information centre in Tokyo was described as crucial by one delegate, who praised its web site, publications and events as valuable sources of information about the United Nations for the Japanese people. Delegations also praised the positive role played by information centres in Sana'a, Moscow, Mexico City and Buenos Aires. The information component of the United Nations Office in Minsk was also commended for its performance. One delegation, arguing for development of web pages as the "field voice" of a given locality in the applicable language, suggested that a web page of the information centre in Jakarta in Bahasa Indonesia "would be most suitable and cost-effective". An observer of the Committee expressed the interest of his Government in strengthening the United Nations Office at Geneva, not only as a world centre, but also as an information centre. However, one speaker regretted that the web site of the information centre in Lagos was not functional and contained little information about the United Nations. Another delegation proposed that national information officers at United Nations information centres be allowed to serve as heads of the centres, not only as a cost-cutting measure, but also to ensure effective communication with the people in a language they understood.

42. Several speakers urged that greater attention be paid to the needs of the African continent. One speaker, referring to the New Partnership for Africa's Development, asked the Department, through its new Africa Section, to use the New Partnership programme as the platform for reaching out to the intended audiences and mobilizing international support for its implementation. Similarly, another speaker, noting the core messages of the Department, affirmed that that was consistent with the objectives of the New Partnership and pledged his delegation's support in the realization of those objectives.

43. Many delegations considered the Department's web site, managed by the News and Media Division, to be a real success story. One speaker reiterated his delegation's view that the performance of the Department's web site team was a textbook example of what could be accomplished using existing resources, when dedicated professionals applied the knowledge, commitment, flexibility and creativity necessary to get the job done. The speaker especially commended the web site team for its live webcasting of United Nations meetings and its timely posting of items on its News Centre page. Another speaker, describing the web site as a very cost-effective medium for disseminating information about the activities of the Organization, noted that it had been of immeasurable benefit to all. One delegation, noting that the Internet had transformed the information services of the United Nations, cautioned that that innovation could also be a source of hatred and intolerance. In addressing the issue of information, he said, care must be taken to ensure that the developments that made the widespread availability of the Internet possible were used to advance the ideals of humanity.

44. The issue of multilingualism in the work of the Organization was a major topic of debate for many delegations. One speaker, addressing the Committee on behalf of a large group, praised the Department for the progress achieved since the launch of the United Nations web site. However, he stressed the need for strict observance of multilingualism, which reflected the richness and diversity of the international community and strengthened the values of tolerance and mutual respect. The success of the web site could be further carried forward if the Department were able to develop a multilingual United Nations News Centre, another speaker commented. The introduction of the Arabic News Centre on the web site was welcomed by several speakers. One delegation, however, regretted that the implementation of the Spanish-language News Centre had once again been delayed. Another delegation, taking a critical view, commented that the English-language web site of the Department needed improvement, particularly with respect to the timely delivery of information and news of interest to the public; the search function should be enhanced and comments made by the Secretary-General on his visits outside the United Nations should be made promptly available. Some speakers supported the integration of the Official Document System with the United Nations web site, as it would enhance the multilingual nature of the web site by providing free, public access to all United Nations parliamentary documents in the six official languages of the United Nations. One speaker, while commending the Information Technology Services Division and the Department of Public Information for their continued development of the Official Document System, asked that the service be made freely and publicly available on the web site.

45. A majority of speakers stressed the importance of traditional means of communication, especially radio, for reaching out to audiences in developing countries. The pilot project on the development of international radio broadcasting for the United Nations was welcomed by several speakers as a very cost-effective way of spreading the United Nations message. They welcomed the results of a recent survey on the estimated worldwide audiences for United Nations Radio programmes. According to the survey, in any given week more than 133 million people around the world listened to United Nations Radio programmes in the six official languages of the Organization. One speaker recalled that over the years, United Nations Radio had retained tremendous vitality and would continue to carry the voice of the United Nations all over the world. For the developing countries, that

meant advantages that could not be replicated by any other means of communication. He noted that the weekly audience for Chinese-language programming of United Nations Radio had reached 26 million, which represented 20 per cent of the entire global audience of United Nations Radio. Another speaker, on behalf of a large group, applauded the efficiency and dedication of the staff in charge of radio broadcasting in Portuguese. As for the Caribbean, one speaker noted that approximately 1.5 million listeners of United Nations Radio came from that region. Advocating the continuation of that project, a position shared by many delegations, he urged that resources be devoted to that activity. Another speaker, also calling for the continuation of international broadcasting by United Nations Radio, noted that the Russian radio service allowed 1.5 million people to listen to United Nations news through Belarus radio station number 1.

46. One delegation, while commending United Nations Radio's current arrangements with the Voice of Nigeria, asked the Department to enter into a working relationship with the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, which enjoyed wide coverage in that country. While calling for the pilot radio project to be made an integral part of the Department's activities, one delegation requested a more detailed proposed programme budget for the continuation of the radio-broadcasting project. One speaker, speaking on behalf of his own and another observer delegation, welcomed the pilot broadcasting project, which he characterized as cost-effective and innovative. Such innovative projects should be financed by redeploying resources from less effective or less proven activities, rather than by merely adding a new layer of activity, he argued. Another speaker called for the provision of adequate human and financial resources for the broadcasting of the radio programme in Kiswahili, especially since that particular radio programme had been hailed as one of the success stories of the Department.

47. The activities of the Outreach Division, aimed at firming up the Department's partnership with civil society, the academic community, the media and library services, were noted with appreciation by several speakers. One delegation said that building such partnerships would be one way of promoting United Nations activities at the people's level. Another delegation, underlining that the role of the Department was not limited to disseminating information, but also to serving as a window on civil society, noted that the United Nations had greatly benefited from its partnership with civil society. Civil society groups should be relied upon not only as transmitters of information, but also as elements influencing decision-making within the Organization. He referred to the role of disabled persons and asked the Department to produce materials in Braille for use by the blind. Another delegation, stressing the importance of informing the international community of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, thanked the Department for its continuing efforts in that regard. The annual training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries, which was implemented by the Outreach Division, was also cited by a number of delegations as an important outreach activity that should be continued and strengthened. Another delegation, referring to the needs of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan, which had been affected by nuclear tests, asked the Department to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness on that matter. She also asked the Committee to include that issue in a resolution to be adopted at the current session.

48. Another delegation, commenting on the work of the Outreach Division, found some duplication of functions in its work. Moreover, its outreach appeared to be

confined to United Nations Headquarters, where there was already a wide range of channels available to facilitate the dissemination of information about the United Nations, he commented.

49. The *UN Chronicle*, considered a flagship publication of the Department and now an integral part of its outreach efforts vis-à-vis educational institutions, was described as a thought-provoking publication by one delegate. He argued that the publication should be allowed to continue serving the Member States and the larger global audience. Presenting an opposing view, another delegation suggested that resources used to produce the *Chronicle* would be better spent, for example, by enhancing the United Nations web site in the six official languages or translating United Nations materials into local languages.

50. Several speakers welcomed the Department's initiative to integrate libraries of the United Nations system and, in that context, supported the setting up of the Steering Committee for the modernization and integrated management of the libraries. One delegation, welcoming the efforts to upgrade the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, asked it to take measures to strengthen the depository libraries around the world by providing them training and other assistance. Another delegation recommended that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library assume responsibility for setting policy and coordinating the work of all United Nations libraries. One delegation, taking an opposing view, hoped that the work of the Steering Committee would resolve the unrealistic proposals to transmit to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library the functions of libraries in other locations, including Geneva and Nairobi. Referring to new security measures imposed since September 2001, one delegation called for the Dag Hammarskjöld Library to be reopened for use by members of the public. The newly created Steering Committee should find an adequate solution to the problem resulting from the implementation of extraordinary security measures, he noted. Another delegation asked that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library share its material with permanent missions and, in that regard, requested the Department to distribute detailed information, including a list of information sources available at the library and specific e-mail addresses and symbols.

51. Several speakers commented on the steps being taken by the Department to make performance management an integral part of the Secretary-General's reform efforts, especially the introduction of an annual programme impact review to ensure the alignment of the Department's activities with its priorities. One delegation, representing a large group, noted that self-evaluation and performance management were essential to success; they should not be made contingent on resources from elsewhere being freed up, nor should they be optional for any programme manager. The same delegation also requested the Department to furnish more precise details concerning indicators of achievement and baselines from which to measure future success. Notions of "satisfaction" and "efficiency", which permeated the reports presented for consideration by Committee members, demanded a more thorough interpretation by the Department, he commented. Questioning the link between resource savings and evaluation, one observer described evaluation as a core responsibility that should not hinge on new resources becoming available for that purpose.

52. Strategic partnerships within the United Nations system developed through the newly created United Nations Communications Group were endorsed by several members of the Committee. One speaker commended the Department, especially its

head, for recognizing the potential of the Group and for guiding United Nations system partners in developing joint communication strategies. Another delegation, describing the Group as a suitable vehicle for harmonizing the activities of the information community within the United Nations, underscored the need to speak with one distinct, recognizable voice. The Communications Group had the potential to fill that need, he observed.

53. At the end of the general debate, the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information made a statement, in which he responded to a wide range of questions raised by delegations.

Chapter IV
Consideration of the reports of the Secretary-General

54. Five reports of the Secretary-General were introduced for consideration by members of the Committee, three by programme managers of the Department of Public Information, one by a representative of the Department of Management and one by a representative of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. As the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2003/2) was introduced by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information in his opening remarks and considered in the general debate, it did not receive a separate review.

55. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the programmatic aspects of the proposed programme budget for 2004-2005 for the Department of Public Information (A/AC.198/2003/3), a representative of the Department of Management told the Committee that the report took into account the changes introduced in the Department as part of the reform process initiated by the Secretary-General. A new mission statement for the Department had been formulated, stating that its mission was to help fulfil the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest public impact. In adhering to its renewed mandate, the Department would be guided by the priorities laid down by the General Assembly, with its core message drawn from the Millennium Declaration. In order to realize the mission, the Department had created a new operating model based on a clear conception of the Department's role, the elaboration of its functions in a manner that emphasized current communications challenges and the provision of the expected services to Member States. The Department, in its efforts to improve its ability to deliver effective and targeted information programmes, had put into effect a new operating model, which currently comprised four subprogrammes: strategic communications services, news services, library services and outreach services. The Secretary-General's report included objectives, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement for each subprogramme, in line with the new results-based budgeting. The Committee was told that the report presented to it would also be sent to the Committee for Programme and Coordination and eventually to the Fifth Committee.

56. In the interactive dialogue that followed, one delegation noted that the Department's core message, described in document A/AC.198/2003/3, annex, paragraph 28.4, did not fully reflect the Millennium Declaration, as it made no reference to the need to promote the establishment of a global strategy of partnership for development. She also noted that the wording in the paragraph on the regionalization of information centres into hubs went beyond General Assembly resolution 57/300, in which the Assembly had confined itself to taking note of the Secretary-General's proposal. Moreover, the delegation asked the Department to be more precise about how the resources freed up from the regionalization of information centres would be used.

57. In response, the representative of the Department noted that paragraph 28.4 was a highly summarized reflection of the Department's overall mandate and it was possible to make modifications concerning the Millennium Declaration. As for more precision on resource allocation, he noted that it was not precise at the current stage because not all elements of the arrangements for the hub concept were in place.

According to the report, a part of the resources made available through regionalization would be used for strengthening the multilingual capacity of the web site. The balance of the resources would remain in the information centre operation, he explained.

58. A representative of the Department introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries (A/AC.198/2003/5). The General Assembly, in its resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, had requested the Secretary-General to conduct an in-depth review of library activities at Headquarters and the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, as well as at the regional commissions. As a result of that review, conducted in 2002, the Secretary-General had presented his proposals for the reform of United Nations libraries under three main ideas: that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library would assume responsibility for setting policy and coordinating the work of all United Nations libraries; that the Department of Public Information, in conjunction with the Department of Management, would prepare a comprehensive plan for the integration of library services at various locations through the use of information and communication technologies; and that the Department of Public Information would formulate and implement a plan to improve electronic access to those services, facilitate the transfer of paper collections to electronic files and provide training to the depository librarians. As a first step, a Steering Committee on the modernization and integrated management of the libraries was created to develop and implement strategies for a more modern, efficient and accessible system of library services within the United Nations. The primary purpose of the Committee, which was chaired by the Department of Public Information and included the heads of each of the libraries in the system, was to foster innovative collaboration among United Nations libraries.

59. One delegation stated that while the Steering Committee was "a good first step", it did not go far enough. In his report, the Secretary-General had recommended that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library be the central manager in enforcing real change. The Steering Committee, on the other hand, was only a consultative body. Another delegation noted that the report contained no specific reference to the question of integration of library services. Given the orientation set out by the Secretary-General in his reform report, the delegation wanted to know why the programmatics aspect of the budget with respect to library services had not set out the objective of integrating those services in a way that reflected what the Secretary-General had originally recommended.

60. A representative of the Department explained that the Steering Committee had been set up, only as a first approach, to devise a collaborative mechanism. As for the programmatic aspects of the budget, he noted, reference had been made so far in the 2004-2005 budget at the level of each of the libraries. In the budget request for the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, for instance, there had been a more detailed request for a modest amount of funds in order to make that system work properly. The delegates concerned were told that a more comprehensive analysis of the programmatic aspects of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 would later be provided by the Department of Management. A representative of the Department also agreed to convey to the Secretary-General — and to the Deputy Secretary-General, who had originally proposed the creation of the Steering Committee — the concern expressed by one delegation regarding the leadership role of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

61. A representative of the Department presented the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations (A/AC.198/2003/4). The Department, in response to General Assembly resolution 56/64 B of 24 December 2001 regarding the implementation of the project, had commissioned a survey on the estimated worldwide audience for United Nations radio programmes in all six official languages, plus Portuguese. The survey, carried out with the active participation of 180 partner stations, revealed that more than 133 million people listened to United Nations Radio at least once a week. The representative of the Department noted that there was intense competition to have material broadcast. The fact that those broadcasters chose to use United Nations Radio broadcasts was a reflection of the fact that they perceived the reports to be impartial and objective.

62. Several delegations congratulated the Department on the success of United Nations Radio. One delegate asked whether resources for the Spanish radio section would be increased; another asked why a Portuguese radio programme was not considered "an official" programme in the report. In response, the representative of the Department said that resource allocations among various language units in United Nations Radio were not expected to change. As for the Portuguese programme, he noted that Portuguese was not one of the six official languages of the United Nations.

63. Concerning the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Communications Group in 2002 (A/AC.198/2003/6), a representative of the Department noted that the Communications Group, which replaced the Joint United Nations Information Committee, was formed in January 2002, at the initiative of the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, as a flexible and content-driven mechanism for inter-agency coordination in the field of public information and communications. Through the weekly meetings held at United Nations Headquarters and the annual meetings held at rotating locations, the Group provided a forum for broad discussion and policy formulation on both general and specific communications and public information issues. The overall objective of the Group, she noted, was to develop a cohesive and unified voice for the United Nations system. The Group had created a number of task forces on specific issues, including one on the World Summit on the Information Society (2003 and 2005) and another on the International Year of Freshwater 2003. Another joint endeavour for the Group, she noted, was the 2005 World Exposition, to be held in Aichi, Japan. With UNESCO as the lead agency, the Group members had decided to participate in a joint United Nations pavilion. Thus, by evolving into a flexible but task-oriented common information and communications platform, the Group had helped the United Nations system to coordinate its activities, avoid duplication and speak with one voice, she concluded.

64. The report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, which included its review of the structure and operations of United Nations information centres, was presented by a representative of that Office. Prepared in response to General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B of 29 July 1994 and 54/244 of 23 December 1999, the report summarized the results of a comprehensive audit of the information centres, highlighting the need for an urgent rethinking of the information centre concept in terms of its usefulness and continued relevance. Noting the discrepancy between centres located in developed and developing countries, the representative said that a significant portion of rent and office

maintenance funds, which constituted some 40 per cent of non-staff operating costs, were expended on centres located in developed countries. The Department should therefore assess the need for centres in such countries and review their current number. The report also noted that only a third of the centres were submitting the monthly reports that constituted the principal tool for evaluating their performances. Until recently, no centre was required to prepare and submit annual work plans. The Department of Public Information needed to update the goals, strategies and objectives of the United Nations information centre operation as part of a comprehensive review, the report recommended. It should also carry out an in-depth evaluation of various options to address the issues raised in the report, including the restructuring of information centres on a regional basis and the integration of more centres with local United Nations Development Programme offices or with the lead United Nations agency in the host country or region.

65. Delegations, generally endorsing the concept of regional hubs, wanted to know how the hub approach would be implemented. One delegation wanted to know what the impact of regionalization would be for Portuguese-speaking countries, especially for those in Africa. Another delegation wanted to know if the interests of the French-speaking African countries would be taken into account when establishing guidelines for a regional hub concept. One delegation wanted to know whether indicators regarding the impact of the work of the information centres and the level of voluntary contributions of host countries, civil society and the private sector had been taken into account.

66. In response, a representative of the Office of Internal Oversight Services noted that the main recommendation of her Office, which had been able to provide in-depth analysis of only five centres, was for the Department of Public Information to rethink the information centre concept. The regional hub concept was one option that stemmed from the rethinking. A representative of the Department of Public Information later noted that the Secretary-General had proposed that the restructuring process take place over three years. She further noted that her Department was currently trying to develop new criteria to assess the impact of the centres on the ground. Regarding Portuguese-speaking countries, she informed the Committee that the Lisbon Centre was doing vital work in the production of information material in Portuguese. That was an important issue and if the Centre were to close, there would be another centre working in Portuguese in a developing country. Regarding the French-speaking countries, she noted that French was one of the six official languages of the United Nations and that information materials were available in that language. Moreover, the special needs of the French-language countries, especially those in Africa, would be taken into account.

Chapter V

Preparation and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session

67. At its ninth plenary meeting, the Committee proceeded to adopt by consensus the draft report, including the following two draft resolutions and draft decision:

Draft resolution A
Information in the service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,[9]

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,

Urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, and recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process":

(a) To cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) To ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) To provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) To enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) To aim at, in addition to bilateral cooperation, providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) To provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication[10] of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

Draft resolution B
United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reiterating its decision to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations to it relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat,

Concurring with the view of the Secretary-General that the fundamental premise underlying the reorientation efforts of the Department of Public Information remains General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, establishing the Department of Public Information, which states in paragraph 2 of annex I that "the activities of the Department should be so organized and directed as to promote to the greatest possible extent an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world",

Concurring also with the view of the Secretary-General that the contents of public information and communications should be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the United Nations and that a culture of communications should permeate all levels of the Organization, as a means of fully informing the peoples of the world of the aims and activities of the United Nations, in accordance with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in order to create broad-based global support for the United Nations,

Stressing that the primary mission of the Department of Public Information is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization with the greatest transparency,

Noting that the comprehensive review of the work of the Department of Public Information, requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, and the implementation of its first phase, described in the report of the Secretary-General on reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session,[11] as well as the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change",[12] and its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002, as they apply to the Department of Public Information, provide an opportunity to take further steps to rationalize the work of the Department in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness, and to maximize the use of its resources,

Expressing its concern that the gap in the information and communication technologies between the developed and the developing countries has continued to widen and that vast segments of the population in developing countries are not benefiting from the present information and technology revolution, and, in this regard, underlining the necessity of rectifying the imbalances of the global information and technology revolution in order to make it more just, equitable and effective,

Recognizing that developments in the information and communication technology revolution open vast new opportunities for economic growth and social development and can play an important role in the eradication of poverty in developing countries, and, at the same time, emphasizing that it also poses challenges and risks and could lead to the further widening of disparities between and within countries,

Recalling its resolution 56/262 of 15 February 2002 on multilingualism, and emphasizing the importance of making appropriate use of the official languages of the United Nations in the activities of the Department of Public Information, aiming to eliminate the disparity between the use of English and the other five official languages,

Welcoming Saudi Arabia to membership in the Committee on Information,

I. Introduction

1. *Reaffirms* its resolution 13 (I), in which it established the Department of Public Information, and all other relevant General Assembly resolutions related to the activities of the Department;

2. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General, in respect of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, to continue to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 of its resolution 48/44 B of 10 December 1993 and other mandates as established by the General Assembly;

3. *Emphasizes* the importance of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 as a guideline that sets out the overall orientation of the public information programme for the Organization's goals through effective communication;

4. *Reaffirms* that the United Nations remains the indispensable foundation of a peaceful and just world and that its voice must be heard in a clear and effective manner, and emphasizes the essential role of the Department of Public Information in this context;

5. *Welcomes* the proposals of the Secretary-General to improve the effective and targeted delivery of public information activities, including the restructuring of the Department of Public Information, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly;

6. *Reaffirms* the central role of the Committee on Information in United Nations public information policies and activities, including the restructuring process of the Department of Public Information, and the prioritization of its activities, and welcomes the continued constructive interaction between the Department of Public Information and the members of the Committee on Information;

7. *Calls upon* Member States to ensure, to the extent possible, that recommendations relating to the programme of the Department of Public Information originate and are considered in the Committee on Information;

8. *Requests* the Department of Public Information, following the priorities laid down by the General Assembly in the medium-term plan and using the United Nations Millennium Declaration as its guide, to pay particular attention to such major issues as the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic, combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and the needs of the African continent;

9. *Also requests* the Department of Public Information to pay attention to all major issues addressed in the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals in carrying out its activities;

10. *Concurs* with the Secretary-General on the need to enhance the technological infrastructure of the Department of Public Information in order to widen its outreach and improve the United Nations web site;

11. *Recognizes* the important work carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and its collaboration with news agencies and broadcasting organizations in developing countries in disseminating information on priority issues, and encourages a continued collaboration between the Department of Public Information and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the promotion of culture and in the fields of education and communication;

II. General activities of the Department of Public Information

12. *Welcomes* the steps taken towards the restructuring of the Department of Public Information, as described in the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications,[13] and encourages the Secretary-General to continue the

reorientation exercise and efforts to improve the Department's efficiency and productivity, including wide-ranging and possibly new innovative proposals, taking into account broad principles and directions contained in the present resolution, and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session;

13. *Reaffirms* that the Department of Public Information is the focal point for information policies of the United Nations and the primary news centre for information about the United Nations, its activities and those of the Secretary-General, and encourages a closer integration of functions between the Department and those offices providing spokesman services for the Secretary-General;

14. *Welcomes* the progress achieved since the commencement of the reorientation exercise in enhancing the performance and effectiveness of the Department of Public Information in accordance with the mandates established by the General Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information, also welcomes, in this regard, its decision to implement an annual programme impact review, making self-evaluation a part of the daily work of all programme managers with a view to institutionalizing performance management, and requests the Secretary-General to transmit the report on the Department's annual programme impact review to the Committee on Information at its successive sessions;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in the context of the reorientation process, to continue to exert all efforts to ensure that publications and other information services of the Secretariat, including the United Nations web site and the United Nations News Service, contain comprehensive, objective and equitable information about the issues before the Organization and that they maintain editorial independence, impartiality, accuracy and full consistency with resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly;

16. *Reiterates* that all printed materials of the Department of Public Information, in accordance with existing mandates, should not duplicate other publications of the United Nations system and should be produced in a cost-effective manner;

17. *Welcomes* the efforts of the Department of Public Information to reconstitute the Publications Board, in accordance with existing legislative mandates;

18. *Urges* the Department of Public Information to continue to exhibit transparency to the greatest extent possible, so as to increase awareness of the impact of its programmes and activities;

19. *Emphasizes* that, through its reorientation, the Department of Public Information should maintain and improve its activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries and, where appropriate, other countries with special needs, including countries in transition, and that such reorientation contributes to bridging the existing gap between the developing and the developed countries in the crucial field of public information and communications;

20. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to strengthen the coordination between the Department of Public Information and other departments of the Secretariat, including the designation of focal points to work with substantive departments to identify target audiences and develop information programmes and media strategies

for priority issues, and emphasizes that public information capacities and activities in other departments should function under the guidance of the Department;

21. *Welcomes* the initiatives that have been taken by the Department of Public Information to strengthen the public information system of the United Nations, and, in this regard, stresses the importance of a coherent and results-oriented approach being taken by the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the programmes and funds of the United Nations system involved in public information activities as well as the provision of resources for their implementation, and that feedback from Member States on the relevance and effectiveness of its programme delivery should be taken into account;

22. *Also welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Communications Group in 2002,[14] commends the Department of Public Information on its active and constructive participation in the Group, in particular its efforts to promote inter-agency coordination in the field of public information, encourages the Department to continue to play a key role in the newly established United Nations Communications Group, takes note of the efforts being undertaken by the Group to develop further several key initiatives, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at successive sessions on the activities of the Group;

23. *Appreciates* the continued efforts of the Department of Public Information in issuing daily press releases, and requests the Department to continue providing this invaluable service to both Member States and representatives of the media, while considering possible means of improving their production process and streamlining their format, structure and length, keeping in mind the views of Member States and the fact that other departments may be providing similar or overlapping services in this regard;

24. *Acknowledges* the mission statement proposed in the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications,[15] which is intended to include all activities of the Department, and which reads as follows: "The Department of Public Information's mission is to help fulfil the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest public impact";

25. *Welcomes* the new operating model of the Department of Public Information as described in the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications, which, inter alia, recognizes that content generation emanates from the other departments and offices of the Secretariat and organizations of the United Nations system, while content coordination and refinement as well as content presentation and distribution are the responsibility of the Department, working in close cooperation with the media, Member States and civil society partners;

26. *Requests* that during the deliberations on the item "Questions relating to information" in the Fourth Committee during the successive regular sessions of the General Assembly, an informal interaction between the Secretariat and members of the Fourth Committee should take place after the presentation by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information on the substance of that oral briefing, within existing resources;

Multilingualism and public information

27. *Welcomes* the ongoing efforts of the Department of Public Information to enhance multilingualism in its activities and encourages the Department to continue its endeavours in this regard;

28. *Emphasizes* the importance of ensuring the full, equitable treatment of all the official languages of the United Nations in all activities of the Department of Public Information, and stresses the importance of fully implementing its resolution 52/214 of 22 December 1997, in section C of which it requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the texts of all new public documents in all six official languages, and information materials of the United Nations, are made available daily through the United Nations web site and are accessible to Member States without delay;

29. *Reaffirms* its request to the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of Public Information has appropriate staffing capacity in all official languages of the United Nations to undertake all its activities;

30. *Reminds* the Secretary-General of the need to include in future programme budget proposals for the Department of Public Information the importance of using all six official languages in its activities;

Bridging the digital divide

31. *Recalls* its decision, endorsed in its resolution 56/183 of 21 December 2001, to convene the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunis in 2005, welcomes the Department of Public Information's initiatives undertaken for this Summit, encourages States, relevant United Nations bodies and entities, other intergovernmental institutions and civil society to continue to actively participate in this process, and reaffirms the importance of the active involvement and support of the Department of Public Information in raising global awareness of the Summit and its main objectives;

32. *Commends* the Secretary-General for the establishment of the United Nations Information Technology Service, the Health InterNetwork and the Information and Communications Technology Task Force with a view to bridging the digital divide and as a response to the continuing gulf between developed and developing countries, welcomes the contribution of the Department of Public Information in publicizing the efforts of the Secretary-General to close the digital divide as a means of spurring economic growth and as a response to the continuing gulf between developed and developing countries, and, in this context, requests the Department to further enhance its role;

III. New programmatic priorities for the Department of Public Information

33. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on programmatic aspects of the proposed programme budget for 2004-2005 for the Department of Public Information,[16] and welcomes the new subprogramme structure that includes: strategic communications services, news services, library services and outreach services;

34. *Acknowledges* that the Department of Public Information, with the assistance of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, is currently in the process of

formulating methodologies and conducting a systematic evaluation of the impact, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the Department's activities over a three-year period, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/300, and requests the Secretary-General to report on the progress made at the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Information;

35. *Reaffirms* that the Department of Public Information must prioritize its work programme while respecting existing mandates and in line with rule 5.6 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, to focus its message and concentrate its efforts better and, as a function of performance management, to match its programmes with the needs of its target audiences, on the basis of improved feedback and evaluation mechanisms;

36. *Underlines* the need for the proposed indicators of achievement and expected accomplishments, which for the first time form part of the programme budget, to be clearly defined, measurable and able to contribute to a meaningful evaluation of activities;

United Nations information centres

37. *Stresses* that the United Nations information centres and information components or regional hubs, as applicable, should play a significant role in disseminating information about the work of the Organization to the peoples of the world, including in the areas outlined in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and emphasizes that the information centres, or regional hubs, as applicable, as the "field voice" of the Department of Public Information, should promote public awareness of and mobilize support for the work of the United Nations at the local level, bearing in mind that information in the local languages has the strongest impact on the local populations;

38. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the review of the structure and operations of United Nations information centres,[17] and requests the Secretary-General to submit further detailed information to the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Information;

39. *Welcomes* the ongoing efforts of the Department of Public Information to review the allocation of both staff and financial resources to United Nations information centres with a view to possibly transferring resources from information centres in developed countries to United Nations information activities in developing countries, emphasizing the needs of the least developed countries, and to any other activities of high priority, such as multilingualism on the web site and evaluation of services, in consultation with concerned Member States;

40. *Reaffirms* paragraph 15 of its resolution 57/300, in which it took note of the proposal of the Secretary-General contained in action eight of ~~his~~ report,[12] to rationalize the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs, where appropriate, in consultation with concerned Member States, starting with the creation of a Western European hub, followed by a similar approach in other high-cost developed countries, and requests the Secretary-General to submit a progress report on the implementation of the proposal with the objective of applying this

initiative in other regions, in consultation with Member States, where this initiative will strengthen the flow and exchange of information in developing countries;

41. *Encourages* the efforts by some United Nations information centres to develop their own web pages in local languages, also encourages the Department of Public Information to provide resources and technical facilities, in particular to those information centres whose web pages are not yet operational and to develop web pages in the respective local languages of their host countries, and further encourages host countries to respond to the needs of the information centres;

42. *Recalls* the appeal made by the Secretary-General to the host countries of United Nations information centres to facilitate the work of the centres in their countries by providing rent-free or rent-subsidized premises, while taking into account the economic condition of the host countries and bearing in mind that such support should not be a substitute for the full allocation of financial resources for the information centres in the context of the programme budget of the United Nations;

43. *Notes* the continuing support of the Department of Public Information in the consolidation of the United Nations field presence in a single United Nations house, and requests the Secretary-General to report in detail on the progress made at the Committee's twenty-sixth session;

IV. Strategic communications services

44. *Acknowledges* that the strategic communications services, to be implemented by the newly created Strategic Communications Division, will be responsible for devising and disseminating United Nations messages by developing communications strategies, in close collaboration with the substantive departments, United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies of the United Nations, in full compliance with the legislative mandates;

Promotional campaigns

45. *Recognizes* that promotional campaigns aimed at supporting special sessions and international conferences of the United Nations are part of the core responsibility of the Department of Public Information, and welcomes the efforts of the Department to examine creative ways in which it can organize and implement these campaigns in partnership with the substantive departments concerned, using the United Nations Millennium Declaration as its guide;

46. *Supports* the efforts of the Department of Public Information, while ensuring respect for the priorities established by the General Assembly, to also focus its promotional campaigns on the major issues identified by the Secretary-General;

47. *Appreciates* the work of the Department of Public Information in promoting, through its campaigns, issues of importance to the international community, such as sustainable development, children, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and decolonization, as well as the dialogue among civilizations, culture of peace and tolerance and the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, and encourages the Department, in cooperation with the countries concerned and with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to continue to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of these and other important global issues;

48. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue to work within the United Nations Communications Group to coordinate the implementation of communication strategies with the heads of information of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system;

49. *Stresses* the need for the renewed emphasis in support of Africa's development, in particular by the Department of Public Information, in order to promote awareness in the international community of the nature of the critical economic and social situation in Africa and of the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development;

Role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping

50. *Commends* the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information for the establishment and functioning of the information components of peacekeeping operations and of political and peace-building missions of the United Nations, including its promotional efforts and other information support activities, and requests the Secretariat to continue to ensure the involvement of the Department from the planning stage of future operations through interdepartmental consultations and coordination with other departments of the Secretariat, in particular with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations;

51. *Stresses* the importance of enhancing the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information in the field of peacekeeping operations and its role in the selection process of spokespersons for United Nations peacekeeping operations or missions, and, in this regard, encourages the Department to second spokespersons who have the necessary skills to fulfil the tasks of the operations or missions, taking into account the equitable geographical distribution in accordance with Chapter XV, Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter, and to consider views expressed, especially by host countries, when appropriate, in this regard;

52. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to report to the Committee on Information on the role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping at its successive sessions;

53. *Welcomes* the transfer of the functions of the Cartographic Section from the Department of Public Information to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, since the Section's outputs are more closely aligned to the needs and activities of that Department;

V. News services

54. *Stresses* that the central objective of the news services, implemented by the News and Media Division, is the timely delivery of accurate, objective and balanced news and information emanating from the United Nations system in all four mass media — print, radio, television and Internet — to the media and other audiences worldwide with the overall emphasis on multilingualism;

Traditional means of communication

55. *Stresses* that radio remains one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching traditional media available to the Department of Public Information and an

important instrument in United Nations activities, including development and peacekeeping, with a view to achieving a broad client base around the world;

56. *Notes with satisfaction* the success of the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations, and endorses the Secretary-General's proposal that the pilot project be made an integral part of the Department's activities;

57. *Requests* the Secretary-General to pay full attention to the parity of the six official languages in expanding the international radio broadcasting capacity;

58. *Notes* the efforts being made by the Department of Public Information to disseminate programmes directly to broadcasting stations all over the world in the six official languages, with the addition of Portuguese as well as, where possible, in other languages, and, in this regard, stresses the need for impartiality and objectivity concerning information activities of the United Nations;

59. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue building partnerships with local, national and regional broadcasters to extend the United Nations message to all the corners of the world;

60. *Emphasizes* that United Nations Radio and Television should take full advantage of the technological infrastructure made available in recent years, including satellite platforms, information and communication technologies and the Internet, and requests the Secretary-General, as a part of the reorientation of the Department of Public Information, to consider a global strategy for broadcasting, taking into account existing technologies;

United Nations web site

61. *Reiterates its appreciation* for the efforts of the Department of Public Information in creating a high-quality, user-friendly and cost-effective web site, noting that this is especially noteworthy considering the scope of the undertaking, the budget constraints within the United Nations and the remarkably rapid expansion of the World Wide Web, reaffirms that the web site remains a very useful tool for media, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, Member States and the general public, and welcomes the creation of the United Nations web site on terrorism;

62. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue to take the necessary measures in order to ensure accessibility to the United Nations web site by persons with disabilities, including visual and hearing disabilities, and asks the Department to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session on its efforts in this regard;

63. *Notes with concern* that the multilingual development and enrichment of the United Nations web site has been slower than expected, among other factors, because of a lack of resources, and that content-providing offices have not, in general, been making their materials available on the United Nations web site in all six official languages;

64. *Stresses* the need to adopt a decision on the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site, considering, inter alia, the possibility of organizational restructuring towards separate language units for

each of the six official languages within the Department of Public Information, in order to achieve full parity among the official languages of the United Nations;

65. *Reaffirms* its request to the Secretary-General to ensure, until such a decision has been taken and implemented, to the extent possible and while maintaining an up-to-date and accurate web site, the equitable distribution of financial and human resources within the Department of Public Information allocated to the United Nations web site among all official languages on a continuous basis, and to make every possible effort to ensure also that all materials contained on the web site that do not change and do not need regular maintenance are made available in all six official languages;

66. *Also reaffirms* the need to achieve full parity among the six official languages on the United Nations web site, and, in this regard, takes note of the proposal of the Secretary-General, as contained in paragraph 33 of his report on the continued development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site in the six official languages,[18] to translate all English materials and databases posted on the United Nations web site by the respective content-providing offices of the Secretariat into all official languages, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session on the most practical, efficient and cost-effective means of implementing this proposal;

67. *Requests* the Secretary-General to include in his report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session proposals relating to the designation of a date by which all supporting arrangements would be in place for the implementation of this concept, after which date parity would continue, as well as proposals relating to the exemption from translation of specific items on the web site;

68. *Stresses* the importance of access for the public to the United Nations treaty collection and United Nations parliamentary documentation;

69. *Encourages* the Secretary-General, through the Department of Public Information, to continue to take full advantage of recent developments in information technology, including the Internet, in order to improve, in a cost-effective manner, the expeditious dissemination of information on the United Nations, in accordance with the priorities established by the General Assembly and taking into account the linguistic diversity of the Organization;

70. *Welcomes* the establishment of the United Nations News Centre in Arabic, and looks forward to the implementation of the United Nations News Centre in the remaining official languages by the end of 2003, with a view to achieving language parity on the web site;

71. *Also welcomes* the proposal of the Secretary-General to provide free, public access to the Official Document System of the United Nations through a linkage with the Organization's web site for consideration in the context of the proposed programme budget for 2004-2005, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session in this regard;

72. *Commends* the Information Technology Services Division of the Office of Central Support Services of the Secretariat on its efforts to ensure that the required technological infrastructure is in place to accommodate the imminent linkage of the Official Document System to the United Nations web site, and also

commends the Department of Public Information for addressing issues of content management relating to that System;

73. *Notes* that the integration of the Official Document System with the United Nations web site will significantly enhance the multilingual nature of the site and will lead to efficiencies throughout all Secretariat departments through the elimination of duplicate formatting and duplicate posting of documents on the site;

74. *Welcomes* the electronic mail-based United Nations News Service, distributed worldwide through e-mail by the Department of Public Information, and requests the Department to provide this service in all official languages, ensuring that news-breaking stories and news alerts are accurate, impartial and free of bias;

75. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the efforts of the High-Level Committee on Management to establish a United Nations portal, an inter-agency search facility encompassing the public web sites of all United Nations system organizations, a description of which is contained in annex II to the Secretary-General's report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications;[13]

76. *Calls upon* the Department to encourage all United Nations system entities to participate in the United Nations system search pilot project, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session on the activities of the High-Level Committee on Management in this regard;

VI. Library services

77. *Notes* that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library is part of the Outreach Division of the Department of Public Information, notes also the continuing efforts of the Secretary-General to make the Library a virtual library with world outreach, reiterates the need to maintain the provision of hard copies to Member States, subject to the relevant provisions of its resolution 57/283 of 15 April 2003, and notes further the efforts of the Secretary-General to enrich, on a multilingual basis, the stock of books and journals in the Library, including publications on peace and security and development-related issues, in order to ensure that the Library continues to be a broadly accessible resource for information about the United Nations and its activities;

78. *Welcomes* the creation of the Steering Committee on the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, which is to develop and implement a strategy to achieve a more modern, efficient and accessible system within the United Nations, requests the Secretary-General, in guiding the work of the Steering Committee, to take into account the specificity and comparative advantage of each member library while ensuring an integrated, coherent and coordinated approach on United Nations libraries management and policy, and also requests the Secretary-General to report on the work of the Steering Committee to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session;

79. *Recognizes* the importance of the depository libraries in disseminating information and knowledge about United Nations activities, and, in this connection, urges the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, in its capacity as the focal point, to take necessary initiatives to strengthen such libraries by providing regional training and other assistance;

80. *Notes* the holding of training courses, conducted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library for the representatives of Member States and Secretariat staff, on the use of Cyberseek, web search, the Intranet, United Nations documentation, United Nations Info Quest and the Official Document System of the United Nations;

81. *Recalls* paragraph 44 of its resolution 56/64 B of 24 December 2001, in which it welcomed the role of the Department of Public Information in fostering increased collaboration among libraries of the United Nations system, particularly in establishing one central system-wide online catalogue that will allow for the searching of the bibliographic records of all print holdings of all United Nations system libraries, commends the United Nations International Computing Centre for developing the United Nations System Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System, which provides a single point of access to library catalogues, indexes and abstract databases, library holdings, links to full-text resources, and archives; also commends the Department for its role in the development of the United Nations Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System, requests the Department to encourage all United Nations system organizations to participate in the system; and also requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session in this regard;

82. *Looks forward* to the in-depth review of the library activities requested in paragraph 34 of its resolution 56/253, and requests that such a review be presented as soon as possible, and no later than at the main part of its fifty-eighth session;

83. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries,[19] and looks forward to further information and proposals as requested in paragraph 14 of its resolution 57/300, to be submitted to the relevant United Nations bodies, including the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session;

VII. Outreach services

84. *Acknowledges* that the outreach services, which are to be implemented by the Outreach Division of the Department of Public Information, will work towards promoting awareness of the role and work of the United Nations on priority issues;

85. *Notes* the importance of the continued implementation by the Department of Public Information of the ongoing programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and countries in transition, as mandated by the General Assembly, and encourages the Department to consider how best to maximize the benefits derived from the programme by reviewing, inter alia, its duration and the number of its participants;

86. *Recognizes* the need for the Department of Public Information to increase its outreach services in all regions, and reiterates the need to include, in the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications, an analysis of the present reach and scope of the Department's activities, identifying the widest possible spectrum of audiences and geographical areas that are not covered adequately and that may require special attention, including the appropriate means of communication and bearing in mind local language requirements;

87. *Congratulates* the United Nations Correspondents Association for its Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Scholarship Fund, which sponsors journalists from developing countries to come to the United Nations Headquarters and report on the activities during the General Assembly, and urges donors to extend financial support to the Fund so that it may increase the number of such scholarships to journalists in this context;

VIII. Final remarks

88. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session and to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

89. *Requests* the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session;

90. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-ninth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

Draft decision
Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 99 to 102 and to appoint Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Switzerland as members of the Committee on Information.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/35/21), annex, sect. V.

[2] Ibid., *Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/36/21); ibid., *Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* and corrigendum (A/37/21 and Corr.1); ibid., *Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* and corrigenda (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2); ibid., *Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/39/21); ibid., *Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/40/21); ibid., *Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/41/21); ibid., *Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/42/21); ibid., *Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/43/21); ibid., *Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/44/21); ibid., *Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/45/21); ibid., *Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/46/21); ibid., *Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/47/21); ibid., *Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/48/21); ibid., *Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/49/21); ibid., *Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/50/21); and ibid., *Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/51/21).

[3] Ibid., *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/52/21/Rev.1).

[4] Ibid., *Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/53/21/Rev.1).

[5] Ibid., *Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21* and addendum (A/54/21 and Add.1).

[6] Ibid., *Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/55/21).

[7] Ibid., *Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* and addendum (A/56/21 and Add.1).

[8] Ibid., *Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/57/21).

[9] To be issued as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/58/21).

[10] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, Belgrade, 23 September to 28 October 1980*, vol. 1, *Resolutions*, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

[11] A/AC.198/2002/2.

[12] A/57/387 and Corr.1.

[13] A/AC.198/2003/2.

[14] A/AC.198/2003/6.

[15] A/AC.198/2003/2, para. 11.

[16] A/AC.198/2003/3.

[17] A/57/747.

[18] A/AC.198/2002/6.

[19] A/AC.198/2003/5.

Annex I

Statement delivered by the Chairman of the Committee on Information at the opening of the twenty-fifth session of the Committee on 28 April 2003

1. May I begin by stating how deeply beholden I am to you, the members of this Committee, for electing me as your Chairman. You thereby do me and my country, Bangladesh, great honour and place me in your debt. I should be derelict in my responsibilities were I not, at the same time, to pay high tribute to my distinguished predecessor and good friend, Ambassador Milos Alcalay, for his wise and skilful leadership over the past two years. I shall continue to count on him for support and guidance and surely take him up on the assurances of the same that he has provided. It is our good fortune that the Department of Public Information right now should be headed by a person of such prodigious qualities as Under-Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor. It seems to me that he is the right person, at the right place, at the right time, and I look forward to working with him to carry forward the task of transformation of the Department in consonance with the vision of the membership and of the Secretary-General.

2. As we are all doubtless aware, this twenty-fifth session of the Committee is taking place within the matrix of extraordinarily trying times. In many ways our resolve and commitment, which had originally led us to create and shape the United Nations, is being severely tested. Yet, at this time, if the question is posed to the peoples of the world if we need the Organization today as much as we did when it was first set up, the response of the overwhelming majority would be a resounding "yes". In a world that will sadly continue to be riven by conflicts and turmoil, a forum for dialogue and deliberations will always be required. When great calamities occur, man-made and natural, massive humanitarian aid will be needed to be extended to the victims. When human rights abuses take place, and they still unfortunately do, often flagrantly and with impunity, we will need the Organization to bear witness and to condemn them. We cannot afford to allow development assistance, as delivered by the United Nations without political strings, to disappear. Above all, now more than ever before, we will need the United Nations to bring to fruition the solemn pledges of the Millennium Declaration, to devote the first 15 years of our new century to bringing about significant improvements in our lives by putting an end to extreme poverty and hunger, widespread illiteracy and disease.

3. Our meeting also coincides with an important period of reform within the Organization, the second phase, as elaborated in the Secretary-General's report entitled "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change". It contains a number of insightful proposals for the increased efficiency and effectiveness of the Department of Public Information. I am happy to be able to say, with a modicum of satisfaction, that I was one of the facilitators working with the President of the General Assembly during consultations on the report. The outcome was resolution 57/300, adopted by consensus, a clear indication of the prevalent political will in favour of the reforms. Paragraph 12 of the resolution reaffirms the role of this Committee in guiding the restructuring of the Department and invites us to engage actively in the process.

4. Our peers, the Members of the United Nations, have thus charged us in this Committee with an onerous responsibility. I have no doubt that we shall succeed in

discharging it, imbued as we are with new collective thinking and inspired as we are by the spirit of progress. It is not merely change for the sake of change we seek, but a transformation of that key department through a strong and practical action plan, to further empower and adjust it to respond to the realities and challenges of its current tasks. It is through this Department that the "voice" of the United Nations will be heard and listened to around the world, through the traditional media and the latest online technologies, and in cooperation and collaboration with a wide array of international partners.

5. The Committee and the Department of Public Information can play a most useful role in being not only the voice of the global Organization to the peoples of the world, but also a conduit to the Organization of the views of the peoples from all the regions of the world. This would thus be a two-way street. It would enable the identification, collation and transmittal of "best practices". It would facilitate pressing into the service of humanity the positive elements of globalization, such as information technology, which could indeed assist societies that have missed the bus of progress to "leap-frog" stages of development. This Committee will need to pay particular attention to the concerns of the developing countries of the South. Our actions must be guided by the need to focus on the developmental goals we have set for ourselves, such as the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. Much thinking will need to be done to organize ourselves thus, but I know for certain we have the intellectual resources and capabilities to address ourselves to these tasks.

6. The Department is to be congratulated for the timely issuance of the five reports on the various aspects of its work. There is also the additional report, document A/57/747, prepared by the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the review and structure of the operations of United Nations information centres. These have been placed before us for our consideration and action. The report before us on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information has a major sector on the areas of higher priority for the Department of Public Information containing important proposals on the information centres, multilingualism, the United Nations web site and evaluation activities. We welcome the creative approach of the Department on these issues. We must review the new strategic vision carefully and accord the Department the necessary support and guidance.

7. May I remind you that the General Assembly will be considering the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 this autumn. In this connection, Assembly resolution 52/220 stressed the role of the relevant intergovernmental bodies, such as our Committee, in the consideration of the proposed programme budget. It is therefore incumbent upon us to examine carefully the programmatic aspects of the proposed budget for the Department of Public Information, which is set out in document A/AC.198/2003/3.

8. This Committee has long registered its concern about the burgeoning digital divide between the developed and developing countries with regard to information and communication technology. It will be our task to encourage the Department of Public Information to play a strong role in the preparations leading up to the World Summit on the Information Society, scheduled for late this year, and for 2005, so that the Summit can have a positive and lasting impact.

9. We will soon hold our traditional commemoration of World Press Freedom Day. In the course of doing so, we will pay tribute to journalists in conflict

situations. We will honour those journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty during the Iraq war. We will also pay homage to those who relentlessly labour around the world for the sake of peace, freedom, human rights, justice, equity and for the removal of poverty and human suffering, often in the face of great adversity, but always with courage and determination. This world would be poorer without them.

10. We must all aim at making this a fruitful and successful session. This will not be possible without the support and cooperation of the total membership. We are lucky to be served by a most efficient Secretary, Thérèse Gastaut, and a set of skilled professional staff. For my own part, I shall try and make my best contribution. There is no reason why, through our combined endeavours, we should not be able to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves. It is true our world may at times appear divided. But there is no reason we should not try to bring harmony where there is chaos and conflict, and unity where there is division, by helping in the creation of universal values, by opening, as the poet Rabindranath Tagore urged us to do, the windows of our hearts and minds to allow for the free flow of ideas and cultures from around the world.

Annex II

Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information at the opening of the twenty-fifth session of the Committee on Information, held on 28 April 2003

1. It is a special pleasure and a privilege for me to address this twenty-fifth session of the Committee on Information. In India, where I come from, and I know also in Bangladesh, your own country, Ambassador Chowdhury, the twenty-fifth year is called a silver jubilee and is considered an occasion for great celebration. For the past 25 years, this Committee has provided support and guidance to the Department of Public Information, helping it to define its task in a constantly changing global information environment and to meet difficult challenges. On behalf of my Department and my staff, I wish, on this silver jubilee, to acknowledge the positive contribution of this Committee and to express my appreciation for its continued support.

2. I should like to take this opportunity to welcome warmly the newly elected Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, and the members of the Bureau. I have every confidence that under Ambassador Chowdhury's able guidance, this Committee will make even more progress towards helping the Department accomplish the new goals it has set for itself. I am especially indebted to you, Mr. Chairman, for your kind words addressed to me. The interest you have already shown in the work of the Department is greatly encouraging. And your inspirational opening statement has started this meeting with just the right tone and in the right direction.

3. I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the outgoing Chairman, His Excellency Ambassador Milos Alcalay, and the other members of his Bureau. Ambassador Alcalay has presided over the Committee with rare commitment and vigour at a time when the Department of Public Information has been undergoing a comprehensive reorientation of its work programme. His diplomatic skills, his dynamic leadership and dedication to the success of this Department have been an inspiration to us all. And once again, I thank you, Ambassador Alcalay, for your many kind words addressed to me personally, of which I hope to prove worthy.

4. We are meeting at a time when the recent and ongoing events in Iraq and the humanitarian situation facing its people have posed serious challenges for the United Nations. Many were deeply worried about the broader, long-term implications of this war — both for the region and the world. Serious questions have also been raised about the future of the Organization. People in certain quarters were declaring that the United Nations was now "irrelevant" and even comparing its fate to that of the League of Nations. Others were genuinely concerned about what they saw as the United Nations failure to prevent the war and the consequent weakening of the Organization.

5. The world is slowly coming to realize that neither of these negative analyses is true. The breadth and depth of the disappointment in so many countries at the failure of the Security Council to find a collective solution showed how much was expected of the United Nations. We should be encouraged by the conviction of people all over

the world that the United Nations is the institution where decisions on matters of collective peace and security should be taken. In this respect, the Secretary-General has said it is his belief that the United Nations family "may come out of this difficult experience more relevant than ever ! efore".

6. For us in the Department of Public Information, the greatest challenge has been finding ways and means to increase global awareness and understanding of the multiple roles of the United Nations in the Iraq crisis. The need to ensure that the immediacy and intensity of the situation in Iraq did not overwhelm communication of what the United Nations was doing in many other critical areas around the world was no less challenging. We did succeed in conveying the message that success or failure in any one area, however important, does not make or break the United Nations. At the same time, we learned once again that the general public, and even the mass media, rarely distinguish between the role of the United Nations as a "stage" on which Member States play their parts and may agree or disagree, and that of the United Nations as an "actor", intervening with its agencies and staff in various situations. Let me abandon the theatrical metaphor and simply state: when the Department of Public Information speaks for the United Nations, it therefore represents the Organization as a whole — you, the Member States, included.

7. Since the beginning of the crisis at the end of 2002, the Department of Public Information has played a central coordinating role in conveying a consistent message on the United Nations role in the Iraq crisis. I chaired a system-wide inter-agency communications task force to ensure coordinated information-gathering and a rapid-response communications strategy and we issued regular media guidance and talking points to United Nations officials around the world. Initially, our efforts focused on the need to seek a peaceful solution and therefore concentrated on the role of the United Nations inspectors and the Security Council process. Once the conflict had begun, we concentrated on the need to ensure the protection of Iraqi civilians and on meeting their humanitarian requirements, as well as the centrality of the issues of Iraqi sovereignty and territorial integrity. Today, the focus is on post-war Iraq and the nature of a possible United Nations role. This guidance, which is constantly revised to ensure its relevance to unfolding developments and to highlight what are considered the "messages of the day", is circulated to all senior United Nations officials and Directors of United Nations information centres so they may proactively communicate such messages to the global public. As a result, hundreds of print media and broadcast interviews have been given by senior officials in major media across the world. In addition, as part of the communications strategy, opinion pieces by the Secretary-General and senior officials, including myself, on different aspects of the crisis have been published in newspapers around the world.

8. In close cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations agencies and programmes, we established in March a press centre in Amman to provide daily briefings on humanitarian developments. Our communications efforts have been directed not only at the media, but also at the public at large. The success of this effort was clearly conveyed by the headline of an article about our Department's Public Inquiries Unit, published by *The Wall Street Journal* on 26 March 2003: "Cubicle front lines: UN staffers listen to an agitated public". In March 2003 alone, the Unit, an often unheralded part of the Department, handled almost 25,000 inquiries that included walk-in visitors, telephone calls, letters and e-mails.

9. In our continuing efforts to focus on the situation in Iraq, we have organized a special event on 2 May in observance of World Press Freedom Day, with the theme "The Media and Armed Conflict". As we have learned, the conflict in Iraq has claimed the lives of a number of journalists, injured several others and damaged several media locations. In the words of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, my colleague, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, "the right to freedom of information is dealt a fatal blow whenever a journalist is killed or injured in the performance of his or her vital role". I am very pleased to confirm the information you have already been given that Secretary-General Kofi Annan will address this event, which I think is a clear indication of the importance he attaches to the role of the media and that of this Committee in dealing with the questions of armed conflict and press freedom. Ambassador Chowdhury, in his capacity as Chairman of this Committee, has also agreed to speak. I invite all of you to attend this important observance. As part of our invigorated programme of educational outreach and collaboration with academic institutions, we are also commemorating this special day at Columbia University on the 1st of May. More information on this event can be found at the back of the Conference Room.

10. While the debate on the United Nations role in Iraq continues, it is already clear that the relevance of the United Nations will not be determined by its conduct on one issue alone. As the world reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration, "the United Nations and its Charter are the indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world". The world still faces, to use the Secretary-General's phrase, innumerable "problems without passports": problems of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, of the degradation of our common environment, of contagious disease and starvation, of human rights and human wrongs, of mass illiteracy and massive displacement. More than 30,000 children continue to die each day from preventable communicable diseases. The HIV/AIDS epidemic is claiming at least 8,000 lives every single day. These are problems that no one country can solve on its own and they are therefore our shared responsibility. They will remain relevant when Iraq has faded from the headlines and the Department of Public Information will continue to draw them to the world's attention.

11. I would now like to report to you, as requested in paragraph 66 of resolution 57/130 B, on the activities of the Department and on the implementation of your recommendations. As you know, there has been a great deal of change over the last year and Ambassador Alcalay referred to that. I shall not be presumptuous enough to speak of a "new Department of Public Information", but I can certainly tell you of a "renewed" Department of Public Information. Last year, the Department presented to the Committee the results of the first phase of the comprehensive review of the management and operations of the Department of Public Information. As part of the Secretary-General's new vision for the Department, we have further refined the Department's mission, which is "to help fulfil the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest public impact". With this mission statement as our guide, our aim is to achieve more focused messages, better identification of target audiences, prioritization of the allocation of limited resources among the many mandated activities and identification of programmes that could be improved upon or eliminated.

12. The Secretary-General took the process further in September 2002 with his reform report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further

change" (A/57/387), which launched the second phase of the Department's comprehensive review. The report contained five specific actions aimed at improving the Department's ability to deliver effective and targeted information programmes. We were greatly encouraged when the General Assembly, in its resolution A/57/300, welcomed these proposals.

13. With your endorsement of the initial proposals last year in May and with the Secretary-General's action plan as our guide, we have taken concrete steps towards moulding a more effective Department of Public Information. The reorientation report, contained in document A/AC.198/2003/2, reflects the implementation of the Secretary-General's vision and our comprehensive review of the Department's work. It details the new operating model for the Department, based on a division-by-division reform programme.

14. This model is inspired by the fact that the Department's work is not an end in itself. While the substantive departments of the Secretariat and organizations of the United Nations system are responsible for generating the content, the Department of Public Information will coordinate and refine, as well as present and distribute, the relevant information. This work will be based on the priorities laid down by the General Assembly, with the Millennium Declaration as its guide, and those established by the Secretary-General, including: the eradication of poverty; conflict prevention; sustainable development (you all know the Commission on Sustainable Development is meeting in parallel with us); human rights; the HIV/AIDS epidemic; the battle against international terrorism; and the needs of the African continent.

15. The new organizational structure includes a Strategic Communications Division, a News and Media Division and an Outreach Division. The Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General, though reporting directly to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, remains administratively part of the Department and works in close synergy with us.

16. The Strategic Communications Division is responsible for devising and disseminating United Nations messages. Staffed by communications professionals specializing in the substantive areas of the Organization's work and functioning in close cooperation with the relevant substantive departments, the Division is responsible for developing communications strategies to promote the work of the United Nations on priority issues.

17. A new element in the operating system, resulting from the reform of the Department of Public Information, is the introduction of the concept of the Secretariat departments as "clients", which identify their own priorities, and the Department of Public Information as "service provider", working along clear guidelines given to us by the departments. The issue-driven promotional campaigns which the Division will devise will be implemented using all the assets of the Department, including through print, radio, television and Internet, by working with the media, through outreach to civil society, private sector partnerships and, at the local level, through the United Nations information centres.

18. A vital aspect of this new approach is its extension to the field. Under the Department's new structure, the network of information centres, services and information components of United Nations Offices have been made an integral part of this Division.

19. I would also like to refer to the Office of Internal Oversight Services review of the structure and operations of United Nations information centres, which you have before you in document A/57/747. It includes 15 recommendations that will serve to streamline and revitalize the operations of the centres. I am pleased to report that the Department of Public Information is already taking steps to address the issues raised, such as the submission by all United Nations information centres of an annual plan setting their proposed activities around strategically selected messages.

20. Another mechanism to encourage strategic partnerships within the United Nations system is the work of the revitalized United Nations Communications Group. At the weekly meeting at Headquarters which I chair, this common communications platform provides a forum for consultation and coordination on communications policies, issues and programmes of the United Nations system.

21. A good example of the new partnership between the Department of Public Information and the organizations of the United Nations system is the communications strategy being developed for the World Summit on the Information Society (2003 and 2005) in cooperation with the International Telecommunication Union. The Department is taking an active part in the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force as it prepares for the World Summit. In particular, we are working towards engaging the media as stakeholders of the information society, and emphasizing the role of freedom of speech and the press. In this connection, the Department, in association with the television industry and the Government of Switzerland, is organizing a parallel event in Geneva in December 2003, the World Electronic Media Forum, which will focus on the role of the electronic media in the information society. The current campaign for the International Year of Freshwater 2003 is another Department of Public Information effort that has involved many United Nations system partners.

22. We have also taken into account the General Assembly's call for the United Nations to enhance its public information activities in support of development in Africa. The Africa Section, now located in the Strategic Communications Division, is working closely with its client departments, including the newly formed Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, to formulate comprehensive communications campaigns that highlight priority issues on Africa's development agenda. The magazines, *Africa Recovery* and *Afrique Relance*, continue to provide a valuable means for promoting Africa's issues and concerns to an influential segment of the target audience both in Africa and elsewhere in support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

23. A key element in the successful implementation of the new operational approach will be the work of the News and Media Division. As you know, we rely heavily on the hardworking United Nations correspondents of the major media who are based at Headquarters; their knowledge of the complex workings of the organization make them an indispensable resource for us.

24. But we have also now taken advantage of the revolution in global communication technology to reach out directly to the media in all world regions and I am pleased to report on the rather dramatic progress we have made thus far. In radio, for example, the voice of the United Nations, both from Headquarters and the field, is heard daily around the globe by about 17 million listeners in seven languages every day, thanks to the agreement of some of the world's major broadcasters to carry our programmes daily. I very much hope this Committee will

support the long-term continuation of what, two years ago, had started as a radio pilot project.

25. United Nations Radio also enables our partner stations to cover some crucial United Nations-linked events which they themselves cannot have access to, such as news from the daily United Nations briefings on developments related to Iraq.

26. The establishment of the Internet Service in the News and Media Division — to create a more integrated operation for the delivery of the large quantity of multimedia content it provides — is one example of how the reform of the Department is helping to ensure that we serve the media better. The new integrated effort, which includes the Internet Service and United Nations Radio, will result in United Nations News Centre web sites in all official languages by the end of this year.

27. I should also mention that since the introduction of the United Nations News Service last April, over 15,000 subscribers in 130 countries, among them a large and growing number of developing countries, have signed on. News apart, the great strength of the News Centre is the ease with which users can instantaneously access information related to any particular issue from across the entire United Nations system, whether the subject be terrorism or least developed countries. It is not surprising therefore that numerous external sites, including those of major media outlets, are creating direct links to the News Centre as a source of breaking news and related materials on United Nations activities.

28. A new Outreach Division has also been created to firm up our partnerships with civil society, the academic community, the media and an expanding network of depository libraries. The newly created Civil Society Service, which brings together under one umbrella several sections whose work is closely related, is now far better equipped to meet the demands placed on it.

29. The benefits of this consolidation are already amply visible. The NGO (non-governmental organization) Section, which serves over 1,400 NGOs associated with the Department of Public Information as well as the 2,200 in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, continues to build new bridges with civil society, including the networks of non-governmental organizations. Its efforts have been strengthened by the Educational Outreach Section, which includes the *UN Chronicle*, which will focus primarily on expanding and strengthening our relationship with academic institutions. The number of visitors to Headquarters is on the rise, with attendance for the guided tour, which marked its fiftieth anniversary at the end of last year, reflecting a growing public interest in the United Nations. I would like to believe that this result is at least partly due to our outreach efforts.

30. Many of you had feared that as a result of heightened interest in the Internet, the Department was abandoning the print media. Let me assure you that we are conscious that printed materials remain indispensable in many parts of the world. The *Yearbook of the United Nations*, now a part of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, is on target to release its 2001 edition this summer. I am pleased to announce that the *Yearbook* is now available on CD-ROM for electronically-minded scholars and I do not want to underestimate the efforts to eliminate the backlog which had built up in previous years.

31. In another development with regard to United Nations publications, the new Publications Board, which was set up under the Secretary-General's reform

programme as a standard-setting body with representatives from across the Secretariat, has begun functioning. A new mechanism has also been established in the area of library services reform: the Steering Committee on the Modernization and Integration of United Nations Libraries, which held its inaugural meeting in March and adopted an action plan hoping to maximize cooperation among the various libraries of the United Nations system.

32. The UN Works programme, now part of the Outreach Division, is a multimedia platform that puts a human face on critical global issues and shows how effective projects can change the lives of ordinary people. The UN Works has successfully tapped into the resources of media companies and leveraged the ability of United Nations Goodwill Ambassadors to reach global audiences through original television programming, including the latest *What's Going On?*, a $2 million television series funded by the private sector, and public service announcements on major television stations. I would commend its web site to you: www.un.org/works/.

33. The changes that I have described are already working well and will be further strengthened by your support for this new operating model. I invite you to join me and my colleagues in an informal briefing for the members of the Committee this afternoon in Conference Room 5, from 3 to 5 p.m., to hear more about how the reorientation process has progressed and to give you the opportunity to obtain more information about our work.

34. To plan and implement further changes while remaining within our budgetary ceiling, we have had to reprioritize some of our activities and are proposing to transfer resources accordingly in the biennium 2004-2005. In doing this, we have had to identify areas where savings could be made without diminishing the impact of our mandated programmes.

35. As you will recall, the Secretary-General, in his reform report, proposed to rationalize and consolidate the information centres located in Western Europe into one regional hub. This would release resources for a strong, efficient information hub and for redeployment to activities of higher priority, including information centres in developing countries.

36. This proposal was driven by the realization that now, perhaps more than ever before, it is essential to create a better understanding of the Organization among people around the world and to garner public support for its work. At the same time, it is clear that the resources available at the field level to accomplish this, using the existing structural arrangements, are simply insufficient.

37. The plan to close the nine existing national centres in Athens, Bonn, Brussels, Copenhagen, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Paris and Rome and to replace them with one regional hub, is reflected in the Department's submission for the proposed programme budget for the next biennium. The intention is to benefit from the synergies within the European Union and take advantage of the high level of computer connectivity in the region. I should like to point out here that the United Nations information services in Geneva and Vienna will not be affected, as they perform functions essential to the work of major United Nations offices in those cities.

38. As envisaged, the hub would be staffed and resourced to work in all languages of the European Union and its programmes in the European Union countries would be based on a common list of United Nations priorities. We would seek to

concentrate our operations in fewer strategic locations around the world and to equip these regional hubs with a critical mass of staff, supported by sufficient operating resources, to project a more coordinated message in the regions concerned. The new operating concept would also allow us to redirect resources to other priorities, including to information centres in developing countries, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/130 B. In particular, the centres in Africa and the Middle East would see an increase in resources, enabling them to deliver more effective and targeted programmes at this crucial time. Consideration is also being given to the possibility of expanding the United Nations information centre at the United Nations Office at Nairobi into an information service, which could possibly become a regional hub. We are also considering a hub in a developing country to cater to the needs of the lusophone community.

39. In addition, resources would be redirected to two areas that Member States have asked us to devote more attention to multilingualism, which our outgoing Chairman already mentioned, the United Nations web site and the systematic evaluation of the impact of our activities.

40. None of us enjoys closing an office which is operating well. In implementing the regionalization process, the interests of our loyal and hardworking United Nations information centre colleagues who will be affected by the closure of offices, will not be overlooked. The Department of Public Information and the Office of Human Resources Management have formed a working group devoted to this question and are providing guidance to the affected staff.

41. I look forward to hearing the Committee's views on the Secretary-General's proposal on regionalization and to receiving your guidance on our plans to adopt a more strategic and impact-oriented approach to our communications efforts in the field. In this connection, the Committee requested in paragraph 44 of resolution 57/130 B more detailed guidelines and criteria for the regionalization of the information centres. These have been prepared by the Department and are attached in annex I to the reorientation report. I look forward to the Committee's discussion on these nine proposed criteria and to their endorsement.

42. I apologize, Mr. Chairman, for the length of my intervention this morning, which exceeds the length in previous years, but as you can see, we have a great deal on our agenda this year.

43. The Department has made significant progress in the use of the six official languages, thanks in large part to the emphasis which you and the Committee have placed on this issue. Let me cite some examples.

44. The Secretary-General, in paragraph 8 of his report contained in document A/57/355, presented proposals for strengthening the Department to support and enhance the United Nations web site in all official languages of the Organization. Recognizing that the current resource capacity of the Department was inadequate to sustain the rapid expansion in the use of the web site or to keep pace with the daily addition of new material in all the official languages, the Secretary-General recommended identifying additional resources in the total amount of $1,297,500. The General Assembly, in its decision 57/579 of 20 December 2002, requested the Secretary-General to proceed with the implementation of his proposal through the redeployment of resources within the Department of Public Information, giving priority to the language posts required.

45. Accordingly, the Department is using innovative approaches to achieve the goal of multilingualism within its existing resources. As a first step, as I mentioned earlier, some of the savings to be released from the closure of United Nations information centres in Western Europe will be redirected to web site activities, both at Headquarters and in the field.

46. We are taking a number of measures to advance parity among official languages on the United Nations web site. Since it was launched three months ago, the Arabic News Centre has already established its value and we are currently redeploying resources in order to have, by the end of this year, a News Centre in the three remaining official languages. Steps are also being taken to make available the databases operated by the Department in all official languages. Among the many databases and web sites that are already fully multilingual is the Dag Hammarskjöld Library's United Nations Documentation Research Guide. It is available through the new Security Council portal and can also be accessed from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library home page. Also available in all six official United Nations languages is the fourth edition of the UNBISnet thesaurus.

47. With reference specifically to the French language, thanks to a generous offer from TV5, we will shortly have access at Headquarters to its French language programming. This is a concrete step towards the promotion of a multilingual working environment.

48. Some of you may already know that the Secretary-General has entrusted me with a new function — that of Coordinator for Questions related to Multilingualism throughout the Secretariat. As I assume this important role, I am determined that the Department of Public Information, already the most multilingual of departments, with staff in over 70 countries and web sites in 30 languages, takes the lead in narrowing the gap between current realities and the expectations of Member States.

49. Another vital aspect of our work, and one which I know is of interest to Committee members, concerns performance management. In line with the Secretary-General's reform programme, the Department has taken steps to make performance management an integral part of everything we do. This includes training of all our programme managers in evaluation and audience research techniques, as we started doing in January 2002, the first Secretariat department to do so. We are introducing an annual programme impact review to ensure the alignment of the Department's activities with its priorities. An important part of the Department's broader reform effort to institutionalize a new culture of performance management and evaluation, this annual review aims to make evaluation a part of the daily work of programme managers. To accomplish this, the Department has requested the assistance of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, through both its Management Consulting Services and the Evaluation Section. The former is helping the Department to complete a series of change management projects and the Evaluation Section is assisting the Department in the three-year review of Department of Public Information products and activities requested by the General Assembly.

50. The Department's ability to deliver effective and targeted information programmes will depend not only on how it organizes itself, but also on resource allocations aligned to its programmatic needs. New priorities have been set, a new operating model has been put in place and both short and long-term goals have been defined. None of the above can be achieved unless a revised programme budget is adopted that better reflects the agreed priorities of the Department. Mindful of this

need, the Secretary-General, in paragraph 43 of his reform report, has suggested that since the budget for the biennium 2004-2005 will be adopted in 2003, we should take advantage of this opportunity and "review and update the programme of work thoroughly" and "adopt a programme budget that is aligned with our agreed priorities".

51. To translate the new operating model of the Department of Public Information into programmatic terms, we have changed the subprogramme structures as contained in the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005. We now have a new subprogramme structure, which will enable us to meet the request of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that we align our organizational structure with our subprogrammes: strategic communication services, news services, library services and outreach services. The endorsement of this Committee is being sought with regard to this new structure and the related programme of work, which is outlined in the report before you, A/AC.198/2003/3.

52. The proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 has been prepared on the assumption that the regionalization of United Nations information centres in Western Europe will be implemented. It also takes into account the transfer of the Cartographic Section to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

53. The Secretary-General has stated that one of his priorities in revitalizing the United Nations is to restore public confidence in the Organization by reaching out to new partners and by "bringing the United Nations closer to the people". His distinguished predecessor, Dag Hammarskjöld, understood the value of effective public information five decades ago, when he noted that "to translate diplomacy into the language of the daily press and the headlines of the daily press is not only a very difficult job, it is also a highly responsible job because, as we know, public opinion is one of the decisive factors in the modern world — perhaps the most decisive factor in the creation of policies, international policies in particular" — and that was Dag Hammarskjöld 50 years ago.

54. At this critical juncture, I would like to appeal to this Committee to send a strong message to the General Assembly and to the world: that the United Nations matters and that its voice must be heard. In a world that sees a growing number of walls emerging, dividing peoples and cultures, effective public information can greatly contribute towards bringing those walls down so that we can see all that we share in common and strive all the more effectively to fulfil our common aspirations.

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